

Healthwatch Islington: Looking after our Wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic

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(<https://www.candi.nhs.uk/traumatic-stress-clinic>)

Aims of today

- Making sense of the crisis and how it makes us all feel
- What are some common ways it has impacted upon us (Threats and Losses)
- Coping with bereavement
- How can we promote our wellbeing and resilience

Context

- We are at a time of crisis... We feel under threat....
- We feel overwhelmed...
- Lack of precedent, knowledge, lack of understanding; no clear plan; no sense of control....
- Bombardment and saturation with news, frightening images, statistics Its hard to process... we can't get thoughts and images out of our minds....
- No clear sense of when it might actually end

Completely understandable that we feel the way you do

Common Experiences

Threats:

- *Will I or my loved ones get ill and/die?*
- Is my job safe?
- What is going to happen financially? How will we get by?
- When will I get to see my loved ones?
- How can I help my children with home schooling and do my job?
- When will this end?
- Feeling threatened due to family conflict/relationship difficulties?
- Feeling threatened as remembering past traumatic events/difficult experiences?

Losses:

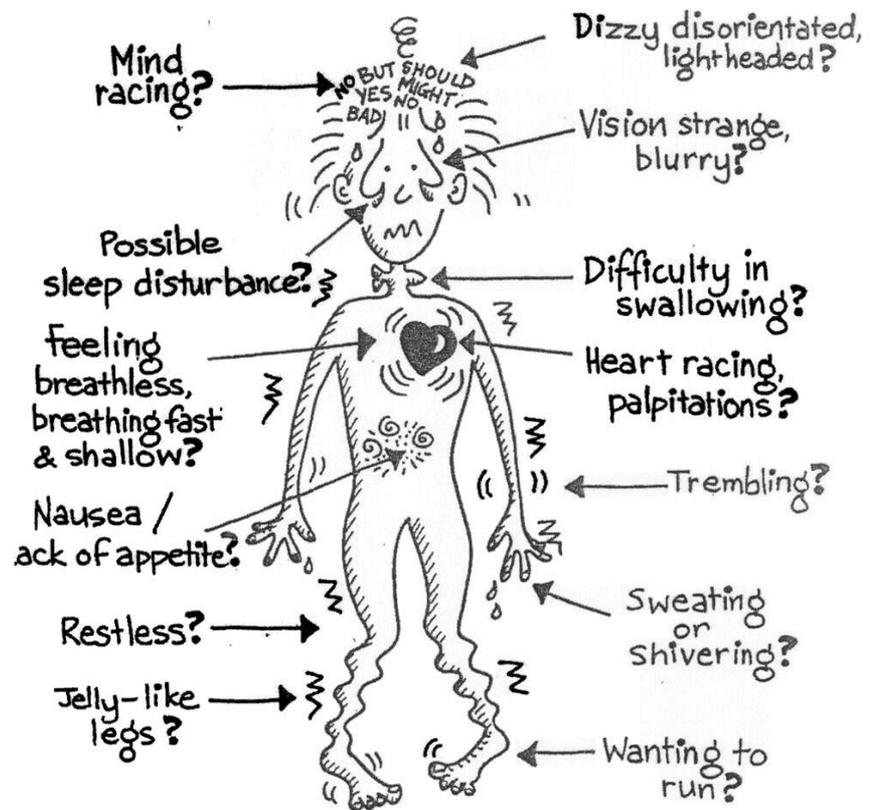
- Isolation
- Missing things: loved ones, family, friends, social contact, work.
- Cancelled plans: holidays, events...
- Health (post-Covid or missed treatment/surgery)
- Bereavement



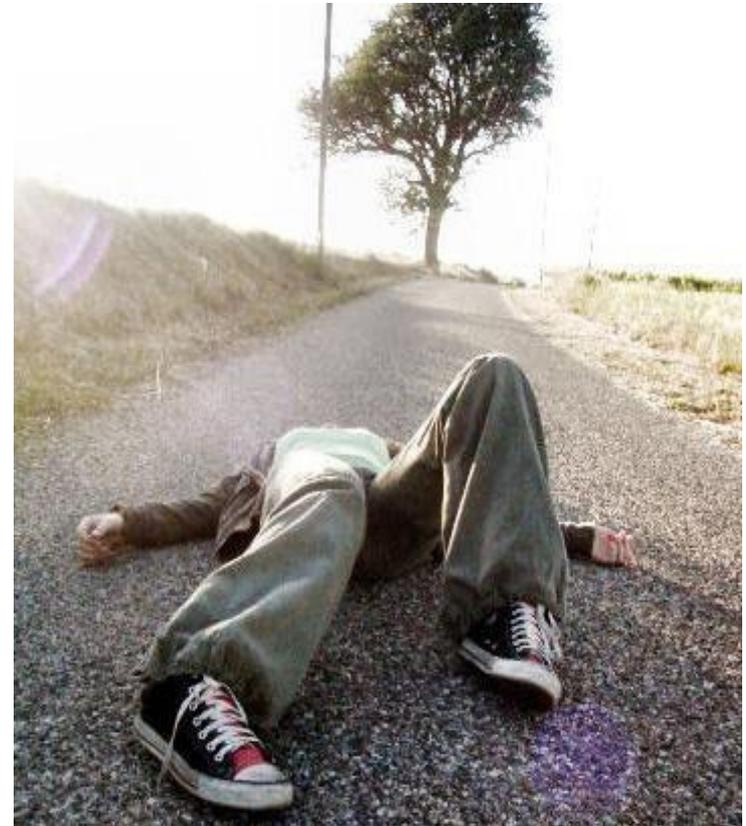
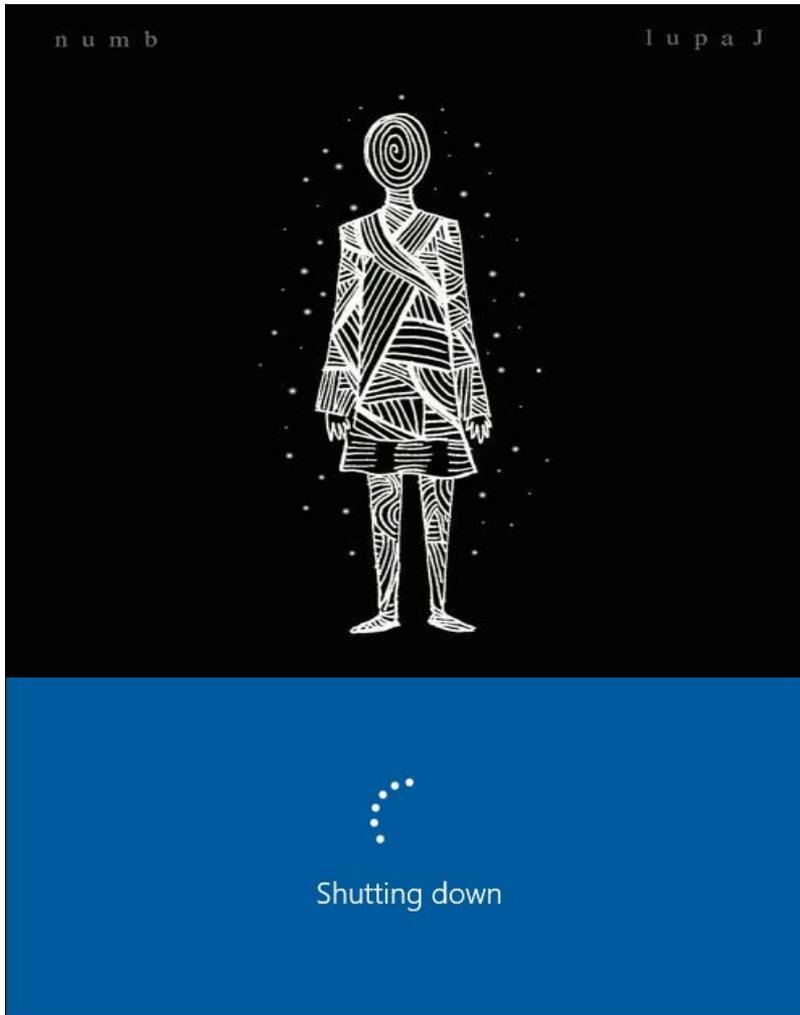
It situations of threat, our minds and bodies are programmed to protect us.....

Our 'Alarm System'

- Something very bad is happening.... is going to happen...
- Racing mind
- Excessive focus on perceived threat
- Can't focus on anything else....
- Can't concentrate....
- Feel panicked ...
- Can't sleep...
- Feel sick



It can feel unsustainable ...



Until we are triggered again....



And we start to feel threat and worry again...

Worry can be very important and helpful:

- If it makes you pay attention to something.
- If it is turned into a 'plan of action'
- If it helps you to be better prepared.

Worry is helpful for things you can control.

BUT:

- When worry occurs without opportunity for action or control, then it can become rumination.

- It can spoil any possible enjoyment, waste time, paralyse you and prevent you from moving forward or taking any positive action.

This can lead to low mood....

Emotions or feelings

Feeling sad, guilty, or despairing

Loneliness, even in company

Feeling angry and irritable

Shame

Not feeling anything

Physical or bodily signs

Tiredness

Restlessness

Poor sleep

Feeling worse at a particular time of day – usually mornings

Changes in weight and appetite

Loss of interest in sex

Thoughts

Self-criticism

Losing confidence

Expecting the worst

Feeling worthless

Behaviour

Avoiding people

Not doing everyday tasks

Or things you used to enjoy

Crying episodes

Not upholding responsibilities at home/work

Bereavement during Covid

- Death may have been sudden →shocking and more difficult to accept
- Unable to say goodbye to your loved one in the usual way.
- May have worries/anger about care received
- May imagine loved one feeling alone and frightened
- May have guilt/anger about how Covid contracted
- Can't do usual rituals
- Isolated from your support network

What you might be feeling



What can help?

- Expressing your feelings (talking, drawing, writing?)
- Looking after yourself
- Making opportunities to remember
- Spending time outside in nature and with pets
- Developing 'rituals'
- Support and comfort from people with lived experience
- Participating in activities you used to enjoy
- Developing an emotional first aid kit/soothing box

What might not help?

- Avoiding talking about what has happened
- Taking risks with your own health and wellbeing:
“What is the point.....”.
- Using alcohol and drugs to try to blot out the pain.
- Not seeking help: “People will think I am weak; I don’t want to bother anyone”.
- Hurrying to make big decisions.

Anchor in the storm



Your partner in
care & improvement



FACE COVID

- F = Focus on what's in your control
- A = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings
- C = Come back into your body (physically ground yourself)
- E = Engage in what you're doing

- C = Committed action (What can I do right now, for me, others, community)
- O = Opening up: making room for difficult feelings and being kind to yourself.
- V = Values (what do you stand for; how do you want to treat yourself and others)
- I = Identify resources for help, support and advice, social/professional
- D = Disinfect & distance

A = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings

STOP TECHNIQUE

Notice what's happening for you. Are you reacting to a threat/stressor?

STOP intentionally pause

Take a breath – slow deep belly breath

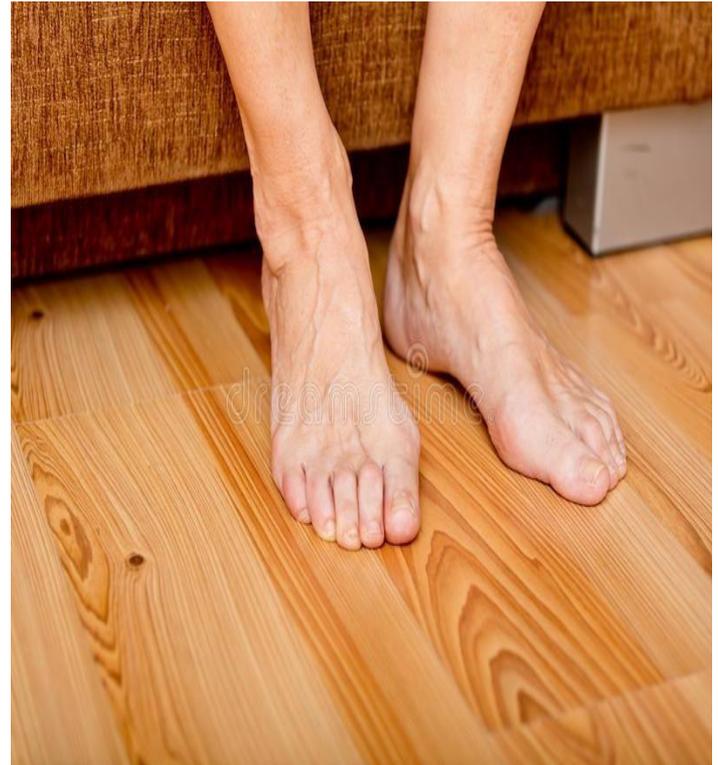
Observe – what is happening to you right now? Thoughts, feelings, urges? Notice kindly and without judgement

Proceed - decide what you need to do now; notice if space for awareness helps you feel more in control of your response



C=Come back into your body:

- Slowly push your feet hard into the floor.
- Slowly straighten up your back and spine
- Sit upright and forward in your chair.
- Slowly press your fingertips together
- Stretch your arms or neck
- Shrug your shoulders.
- Notice your breath where you feel it most
- Take some slow breaths



E = Engage in what you're doing



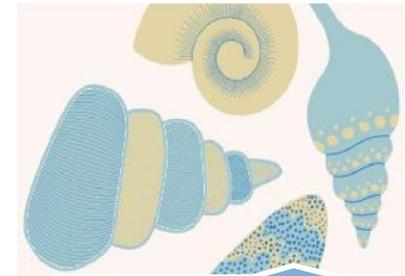
Refocus your attention



Count backwards



Sensory grounding
(e.g. smell)



Find a grounding object



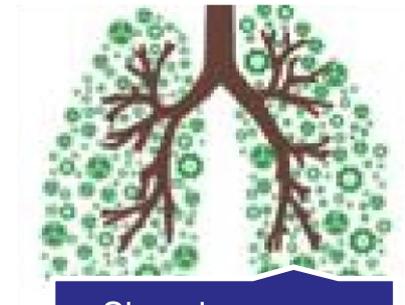
Visualise a grounding image

I am safe in the present moment. I know I have survived because I am bigger and older than in my trauma memory. I have my own family now, and I am

Develop a grounding phrase



Connect to the present



Slow down your breathing



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Self-compassion

- **Be kind to yourself**
- **I'm doing the best I can, in this moment, with what I know now'**
- **Is there another way of looking at this?**
- **What would I say to a friend?**
- **What would a friend say to me?**



What NHS services are available?

- GP's – good first contact
- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Services (<https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search>)
- Crisis Teams or 111 for out of hours urgent help
- A&E or 999 in an emergency
- Samaritans – 116 123
- www.good-thinking.uk

Bereavement resources

[Support after sudden bereavement during the COVID-19 pandemic - Thrive LDN : Thrive LDN](#)

CRUSE Bereavement Care | www.cruse.org.uk | 0844 477 9400

The Compassionate Friends UK | www.tcf.org.uk | 0845 123 2304

Winston's Wish | www.winstonswish.org | 08452 030405 The WAY Foundation | www.widowedandyoung.org.uk | 0300 012 4929

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide | <https://uksobs.org> | 0844 561

www.ataloss.org (Resources and organisations in your area)
<https://listeningplace.org.uk>

Resources for young people and their parents

- Young Minds Beyond Tomorrow:
<https://youngminds.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign-with-us/beyond-tomorrow/>
- Every Mind Matters: https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mindmatters/?WT.tsrc=Search&WT.mc_id=Brand&gclid=CjwKCAiAu8SABhAxEiwAsodSZE3Q_Mg3qaLkLI47_hJFM8bTIBnhdHM3L09QjKsUMALMrgOCD85hRoC--sQAvD_BwE
- [Supporting young people into training, learning, and work during Covid-19.pdf \(bps.org.uk\)](#)
- [Managing Uncertainty in children and young people - advice for parents during Covid-19.pdf \(bps.org.uk\)](#)
- [Advice for parents and carers - Thrive LDN : Thrive LDN](#)

- [Advice for keyworker parents - helping your child adapt.pdf](#)
[\(bps.org.uk\)](#)

General Wellbeing Resources

- [FACE COVID eBook - by Russ Harris.pdf \(google.com\)](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Mind](#)
- [Rethink](#)
- [Citizens Advice Bureau](#)
- Psychology Tools: [Free Guide To Living With Worry And Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty - Psychology Tools](#)
- [Traumatic Stress Clinic | Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust \(candi.nhs.uk\)](#) (Website and YouTube Channel)
- [Coronavirus Public Resources | BPS](#)
- Thrive: [Home - Thrive LDN : Thrive LDN](#)

Camd



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Any questions?

Thank you for listening.